

JUN 26 1970

Please

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ghties

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Just got back
 to my
 office.

Thank you for your
 comments (and your
 patience!) Have you
 sent me the
 hearing statement
 yet?

Then

File Return Discard Report

J. LEDERBERG

manne's.

However, we must not simply substitute one hazard for another. A law that might forbid putting clothes on children to lower the risk of burning is a caricature illustrating the kind of trade-off that must, at some point, be considered even when something as precious as a child's life is at stake.

THE JOB of setting legal standards is much more difficult than reaching a determination that children ought not to be imperiled. The problem has been reviewed recently by Dr. Myron Tribus, Assistant Secretary of Commerce for Science and Technology, who brings to an important administrative role in government an unusual background and reputation in the mathematical theory of risk and decision analysis. (He was formerly Dean of the Dartmouth Engineering School.)

Most systems analysts suffer from a disease called "suboptimization." They be-

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price levels in a low-technol-
 ogy, mass-market, competi-
 tive industry. Even the cost
 of testing and quality control
 will bear heavily on the
 economics of such an indus-
 try, and especially on the
 smaller producers.

It is easy to recognize an
 extreme of dangerous
 flammability, but whatever
 standard is adopted must
 bear a real relationship to
 human hazard and must be
 accessible to objective tests.
 Under the stress of price
 competition, the producers
 will inevitably press hard on
 the standards. Flameproof-
 ing a fabric, furthermore, in-
 terferes with other con-

sumer values like durability,
 style, color and washability.

WE COULD then get into
 an interminable argument
 about how much a child's
 life is worth in terms of a
 company's profits. Instead,
 Dr. Tribus points out that
 this question is actually
 answered by the consumer
 public.

If flameproofed clothing
 for children is too costly,
 mothers will make their
 own from unregulated bolt
 cloth or by converting other
 garments. Some "reason-
 able" price must then be ne-
 gotiated for the value of
 flameproofing to deal even
 with the isolated problem of
 minimizing accidental
 burns.

The cost of flameproofing
 to a reasonable standard
 may not be all that prohibi-
 tive. Many children may be
 saved by the early adoption
 of a useful criterion of safe-
 ty as an interim measure.
 To guarantee that no child
 is ever burned has been im-
 possible since primitive man
 discovered fire.

There is, nevertheless,
 much to do, both in textile
 chemistry and in other areas
 like safety education and
 the social control of napalm,
 to help minimize such trage-
 dies.

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some mini-corrections
 at least.

I hope you will back
 me up on this

Josh.

MEMO FROM
J. LEDERBERG
GENETICS DEPARTMENT
STANFORD UNIVERSITY
STANFORD, CALIFORNIA

TO: Myron Tribus

TX
RC
RO

JUN 29 1970

Myron--

This just came to my attention; I was rather heartsick at the examples you chose-- I may be able to commiserate better with you now about "steering hurricanes"

1) Your comparison of radiation with vinegar is especially unfortunate. Gofman and Tamplin may be off by a factor of 100, perhaps even 1000 in their estimation of somatic (cancer) effects. No one doubts that there is some important genetic effect at the lowest dose rates, and the issue is not whether there is a no-effect level, but what the social cost-equivalent of a mutation should be held to be.

2) A propos 2,4,5-T: yes, there are lots of unanswered questions, and you are certainly correct in relating the vehemence of reaction to its ecological effects, in Vietnam, which should be irrelevant to judging its teratogenicity. The question, I hold, is not whether there is a foolproof case against 245T, but who should bear the burden of uncertainty, while this is being resolved. (I think the

expected risk, at this point of our knowledge, is quite significant.)